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ABSTRACT

The New England Consortium for the Right to Read Plan of Action is designed to assist participating school systems in meeting the national Right to Read goals by 1980. The purpose of the New England project differs from that of most projects in that it seeks to eliminate the possibility of failure rather than to deal with failure after it occurs. The 26 statements comprising the Criteria of Excellence for the project are organized under five main concerns: community and school climate, organizing and managing a reading program, staffing a reading program, selecting and utilizing materials, and fostering reading interests. (RB)

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THE NEW ENGLAND CONSORTIUM
FOR THE RIGHT TO READ

FOCUS on EXCELLENCE

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FOCUS ON EXCELLENCE

An explanation of the criteria established by the New England Consortium for the Right to Read for building success-oriented reading programs

Text and design: Marion McGuire

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November 1973

CONSORTIUM LEADERSHIP

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Contract Arrangements

The Curriculum Research and Development Center, Department of Education, University of Rhode Island holds the contract for this project. Fiscal management is under the direction of Dr. Thomas R. Pezzullo. Dr. Marion L. McGuire is the coordinator of operations.

CONTENTS

	Page
Consortium Leadership	ii
The New England Consortium for the Right to Read	1
Introduction	1
Purpose	2
Process	3
Criteria of Excellence	4
Community and School Climate	5
Organizing and Managing a Reading Program	10
Staffing a Reading Program	21
Selecting and Utilizing Materials	27
Fostering Reading Interests	33
Appendix	
Charter School Systems	36

THE NEW ENGLAND CONSORTIUM FOR THE RIGHT TO READ

Introduction

The national Right to Read program was established in 1970 as an endeavor to urge public, private, professional and non-professional segments of society to work toward the national goal of insuring that by 1980 ninety-nine percent of all people under sixteen years of age and ninety percent of all those over sixteen will possess and use literacy skills. To date, 170 school-based sites, 70 community-based sites, 26 individual state agencies and five states in the New England Consortium have been funded to work toward the national goal.

In 1971, the New England commissioners of education agreed to submit a joint application as the New England Consortium for the Right to Read. The decision to do this was made partly as an outgrowth of the reading needs assessment completed in the late 60's under the aegis of the New England Educational Assessment Project and partly in recognition of the advantages to be gained by sharing the resources of the region. Subsequently, Vermont was funded separately as one of the original Right to Read states. The five remaining states were funded as a consortium on June 30, 1973.

Rhode Island Department of Education, the applicant agency, contracted operations and fiscal management to the Curriculum Research and Development Center, Department of Education, University of Rhode Island.

Purpose

The New England Consortium for the Right to Read Plan of Action is designed to assist participating school systems to meet the national goal by 1980. The steps in the plan are directed toward mobilizing the human and financial resources of the community to establish a reading program of such quality that success in learning to read will be assured.

The purpose of this project differs from the purpose of most projects in that it seeks to eliminate the possibility of failure rather than to deal with failure after it occurs. Most special reading projects identify those pupils who have failed and provide remedial or corrective programs for them. However, while remedial projects have helped many pupils and have had beneficial side effects on school systems, they have been costly and have not reduced the number of pupils who fail. It has been reported that eight million youngsters in our schools are reading disabled. Adding this number to the

nineteen million illiterate adults, many of whom went through our schools, provides a picture of failure that can no longer be tolerated in our society. The time has come to focus on the program that produces so much failure rather than on the symptoms of our problem.

Process

The Right to Read program is asking school and community representatives to cooperatively build a climate and process for change. This involves the designation of reading as a top priority, the appointment of a local Right to Read director to coordinate the effort, the establishment of a local advisory committee, and the adoption of the New England Consortium Criteria of Excellence as descriptors of the quality reading program ultimately to be achieved. A program of staff development to support change is viewed as a key to the achievement of other criteria.

In the conduct of this project we hope to reach all those who can help and all those who need help. We have the courage to believe that together we can reach our goal of total literacy and, thereby, improve the quality of life in New England. We invite everyone to help us in this effort.

CRITERIA OF EXCELLENCE

The Criteria of Excellence are twenty-six statements of conditions that should exist if we are to eliminate reading failure from our schools and communities. They are the hallmarks of a good reading program.

The twenty-six statements are organized under five goals: Community and School Climate, Organizing and Managing a Reading Program, Staffing a Reading Program, Selecting and Utilizing Materials, and Fostering Reading Interests.

The following pages describe the Criteria of Excellence in some detail. There are five sections, each section devoted to the criteria that fall within one goal area. The first section, Section A, for example, explains the four criteria that deal with community and school climate. Section B presents the ten criteria for organizing and managing a reading program, and so forth.

Taken together, the Criteria of Excellence project an image of a program in which people are important. The success orientation is unifying and humanistic. In fact, the Right to Read program is often called a "people" program.

Section A

Community and School Climate

1. THE WHOLE SCHOOL ATMOSPHERE REFLECTS COMMITMENT TO THE IMPORTANCE AND ENJOYMENT OF READING.

The climate of the school stems from the attitudes and values of teachers and administrators. Evidence that the atmosphere reflects commitment to reading can be gained from the decisions that are made in respect to the reading program.

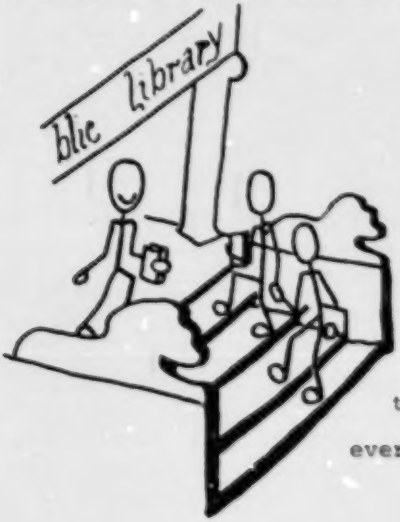
TIME. . . . Reading is given preference in the school schedule.

MONEY . . . Reading is a priority in the school budget.

EFFORT. . . Many activities and materials are prepared to stimulate achievement and interest in reading.

2. THE ENTIRE COMMUNITY VIEWS READING AS AN IMPORTANT ACTIVITY IN EACH INDIVIDUAL'S LIFE.

In communities that view reading as important, interest and involvement are shown in various ways.



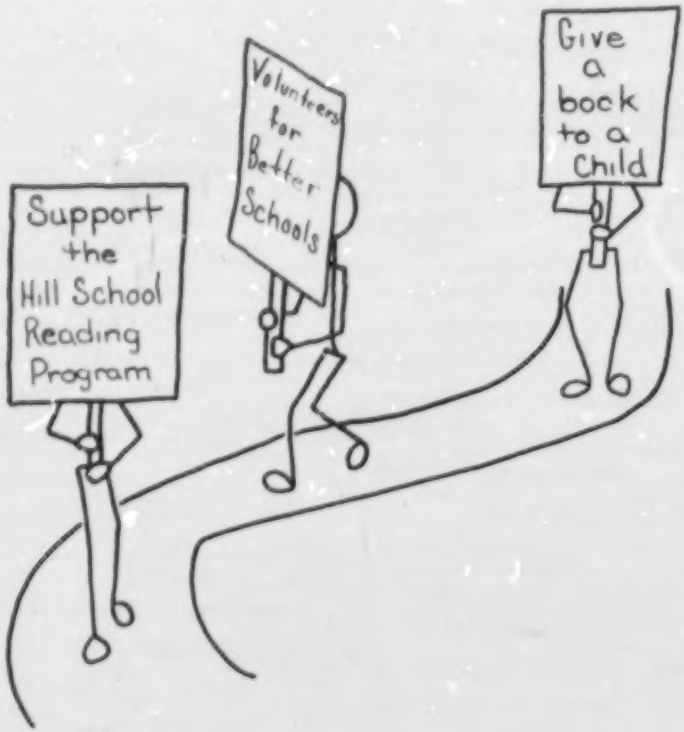
People visit and support the public library.

Parents read to their children every day.

Readers volunteer to tutor nonreaders.

3. THE ENTIRE COMMUNITY ACTIVELY CONTRIBUTES TO AND SUPPORTS THE SCHOOL READING PROGRAM.

Support may be in terms of financial resources.



or human resources.

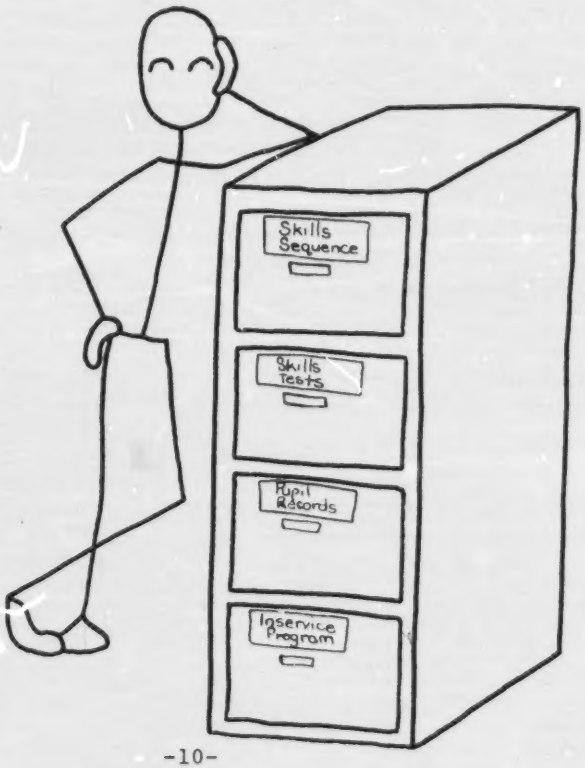
4. THE CLASSROOM CLIMATE REFLECTS RESPECT FOR AND SUPPORT, BY BOTH TEACHER AND PUPILS, OF EACH INDIVIDUAL CHILD'S PROGRESS IN READING.

Studies have shown that both a child's self-concept and his peer group relationships affect his level of learning. To see himself as an achiever, he has to see that others, especially his teachers and classmates, look upon him as an achiever.

For some children, and older students as well, the classroom climate is so important that no learning will take place until it is supportive.

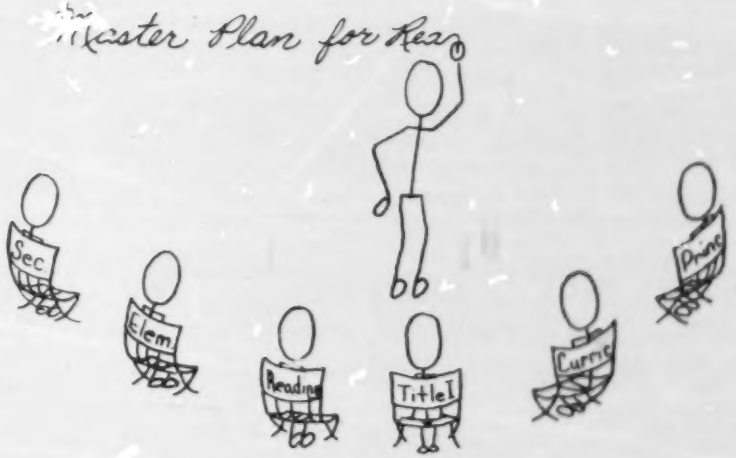
Section B

Organizing and Managing a Reading Program



1. THERE IS ARTICULATION AND COORDINATION OF THE READING PROGRAM THROUGHOUT ALL THE ADMINISTRATIVE UNITS OF THE SCHOOL SYSTEM.

Every school system should have a master plan for reading.

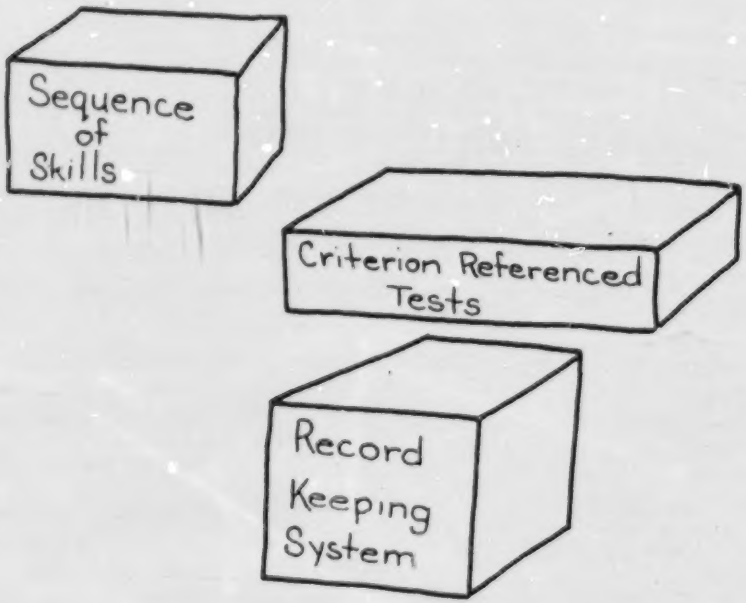


This should be developed jointly by representatives of all administrative units of the educational program in the community.

2. A CONTINUOUS PROGRESS ORGANIZATION OF THE READING PROGRAM IS IN OPERATION.

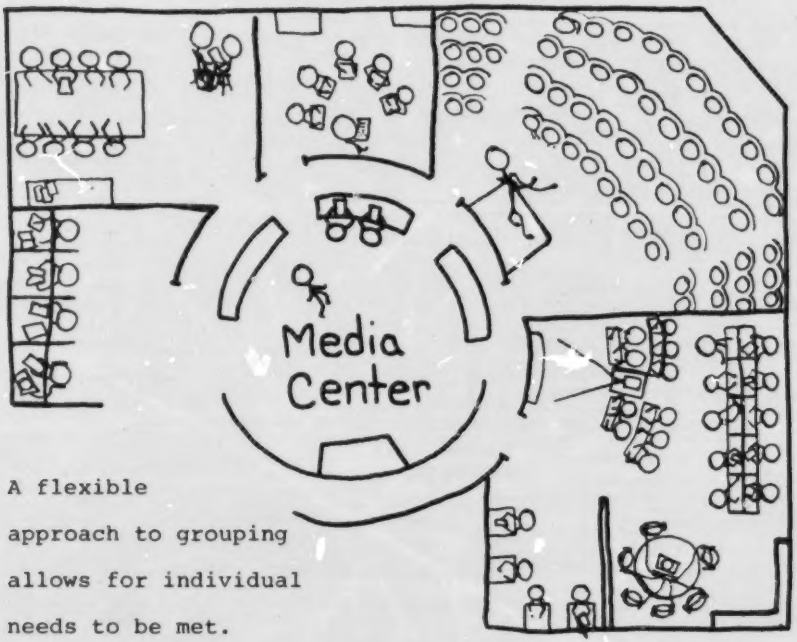
In a continuous progress program, pupils proceed at their own rate. The skills program is vertically sequenced and progress through it is carefully planned with mastery at each step.

The essential building blocks for this type of program are:



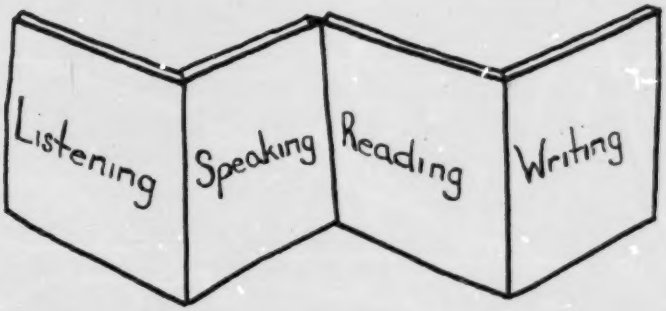
3. THE ORGANIZATIONAL PATTERNS WITHIN CLASSROOMS AND IN THE SCHOOL AS A WHOLE MEET THE NEEDS OF ALL SEGMENTS OF THE SCHOOL POPULATION.

Both pupils and teachers have differing needs and tolerances for structure and openness in grouping patterns.



A flexible approach to grouping allows for individual needs to be met.

4. THE LANGUAGE ARTS PROGRAM IS INTEGRATED, EACH COMPONENT SUPPORTING ALL OTHER COMPONENTS.



All aspects of language and communication need to be related so that pupils see the meaning and purpose of what they are learning. Language skill development should be continuous and coordinated.

- Teach thinking skills through both listening and reading
- Relate speaking to reading and writing.
- Teach the spelling of words pupils need to write.

5. THE READING PROGRAM RECOGNIZES AND ACCOMMODATES THE NEEDS OF SUB-POPULATIONS.

An effort should be made to keep all students in the mainstream of education without labelling them yet providing for their special needs through:

- varied grouping
- special materials and techniques
- ancillary services

6. ALL CONTENT AREA TEACHERS ARE TEACHING THOSE SKILLS NECESSARY TO THE EFFECTIVE READING OF THEIR OWN INSTRUCTIONAL MATERIALS.

Each subject area has special meanings for some vocabulary words. These meanings need to be taught.

Other reading skills are helpful, too. Recognizing the organizational pattern of the chapter or selection aids retention of the various parts. Guidance in previewing, skimming, scanning, reading maps and graphics, and reading for specific purposes improves reading efficiency. Learning to adjust reading rate to the difficulty of the text and the purpose for reading is important.

Teaching reference skills in conjunction with an assignment and using multilevel texts are ways to make study more meaningful. There are many skills a content area teacher can and should teach to improve their students' reading ability.

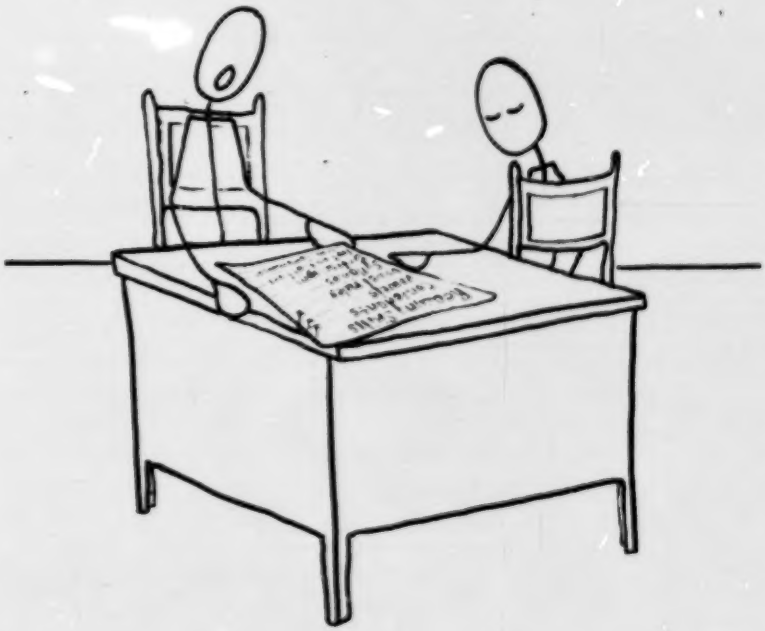
7. THE EVALUATION COMPONENT OF THE READING PROGRAM PROVIDES THE DATA NECESSARY FOR DESCRIBING THE CURRENT STATUS OF ACHIEVEMENT IN READING AND MEASURING PROGRESS.

Administrators may need some norm-referenced test data for purposes of comparing their schools with a national sample of schools. Teachers, however, need criterion-referenced test data to discover what skills pupils have mastered and which ones need to be taught.

Our school ranked at the 51st percentile in reading.
Bobby knows all of his vowel sounds except short e.
Mr Sharp Principal
Ms Sims Teacher, Rm 4

8. THE REPORTING SYSTEM IS DESIGNED TO INTERPRET A CHILD'S READING PROGRESS TO HIS PARENTS.

A good reporting system will tell a parent what a child has learned since the last report. To be able to see that progress is continuous, the parent also needs to know the entire sequence of skills. He can then pinpoint his child's level of mastery.



9. THE SCHOOL SYSTEM HAS A PROGRAM OF EDUCATION FOR PARENTS (OR OTHER ADULTS RESPONSIBLE FOR CHILDREN) WITH SPECIAL EMPHASIS ON PARENTS OF PRESCHOOLERS.

Since parents are a child's first and most influential teachers, the school should work closely with them to foster the child's readiness to learn.

Language

Competence

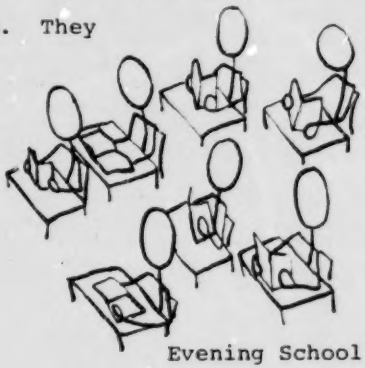
Thinking

A planned program for parents reaps many benefits.

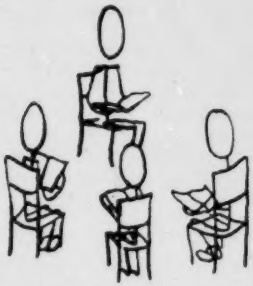
10. THE SCHOOL SYSTEM PROVIDES READING INSTRUCTION FOR ADULTS.

Nearly nineteen million of our adult population are functionally illiterate, unable to read well enough to fill out standard forms such as job applications and those required by government agencies. About three million of them are totally illiterate. They can neither read nor write.

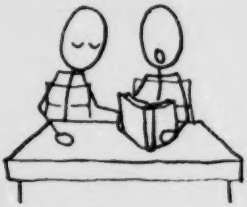
Many kinds of instructional programs are needed.



Evening School



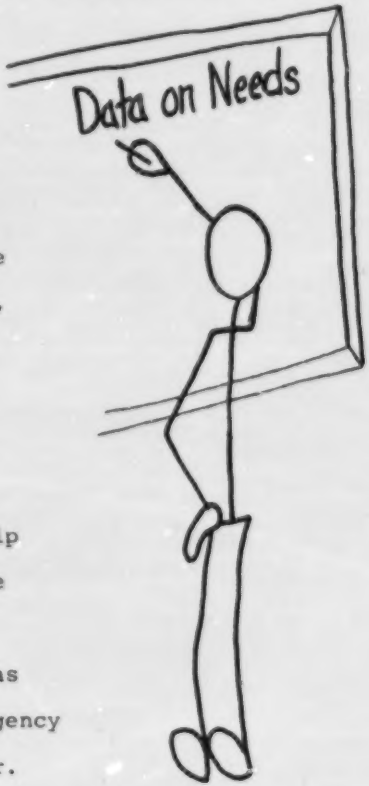
Community Centers



Volunteer Programs

Section C
Staffing a Reading Program

1. THE BOARD OF EDUCATION HAS DESIGNATED SOMEONE WITHIN THE SCHOOL SYSTEM WHO HAS THE CENTRAL OFFICE SUPPORT, RESPONSIBILITY, AND TIME FOR THE DEVELOPMENT AND MAINTENANCE OF A QUALITY READING PROGRAM.



Rebuilding a reading program to meet the Criteria of Excellence requires time, effort, and the cooperation and support of the school and community. Someone needs to be assigned the leadership role to coordinate the group effort. That person is designated as the local education agency Right to Read director.

2. THE BOARD OF EDUCATION ACTIVELY SEEKS CANDIDATES WITH PREPARATION IN THE TEACHING OF READING WHEN FILLING NEW POSITIONS.

Positions Available

Equal Opportunity Employer

2 classroom teachers (elem.)
1 team leader (primary cluster)
1 social studies teacher (sec.)

Applicants must be certified in appropriate area and have nine credits in the teaching of reading. Qualified candidates may apply

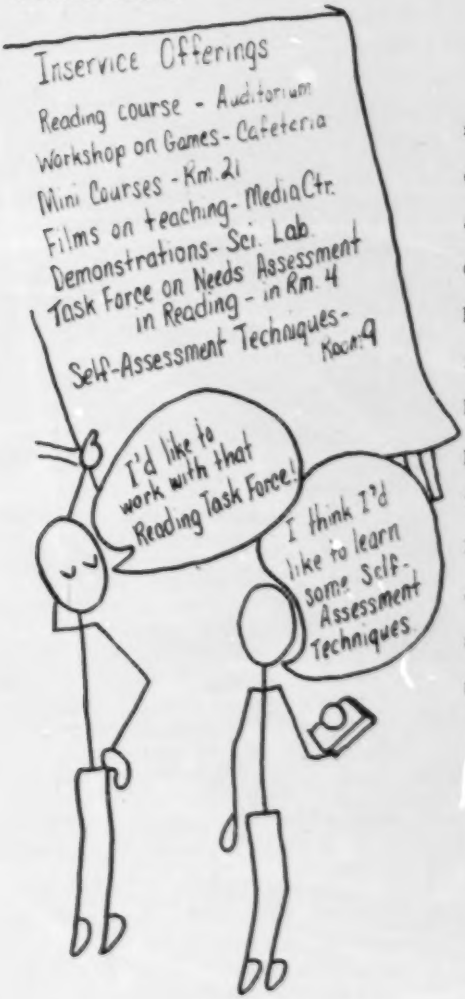
Undoubtedly, the best way to assure that new teachers have adequate preparation in the teaching of reading, to enable them to cope with the reading problems in schools today, is to require course work in reading as a condition of employment. There will always be the need for an on-going program of staff development, but the basic knowledge and understanding should be acquired prior to employment.

3. THE LOCAL BOARD OF EDUCATION HAS ESTABLISHED AN INCENTIVE PROGRAM FOR TEACHER INSERVICE EDUCATION IN READING.

Undergraduate teacher education in reading has remained at a low level of sophistication despite wide infusion of new knowledge in the field in recent years. There is little alternative at the present time to a broadscale program of staff development if the reading program is to improve.

To assure active participation of teachers over a period of time, an incentive program is suggested.

4. THERE IS A CONTINUOUS PROGRAM OF STAFF DEVELOPMENT.


Inservice Offerings
Reading course - Auditorium
Workshop on Games - Cafeteria
Mini Courses - Rm. 21
Films on teaching - Media Ctr.
Demonstrations - Sci. Lab.
Task Force on Needs Assessment in Reading - in Rm. 4
Self-Assessment Techniques - Room 9
I'd like to work with that Reading Task Force!
I think I'd like to learn some Self-Assessment Techniques.

For many years our schools have been criticized for operating at a low level of success. Concerned teachers have been asking for quality inservice programs to help them cope with the problems that contribute to poor achievement. Locally devised programs are often the best response to these recognized needs.

5. THE SCHOOL SYSTEM HAS A CADRE OF TRAINED VOLUNTEER READING HELPERS.

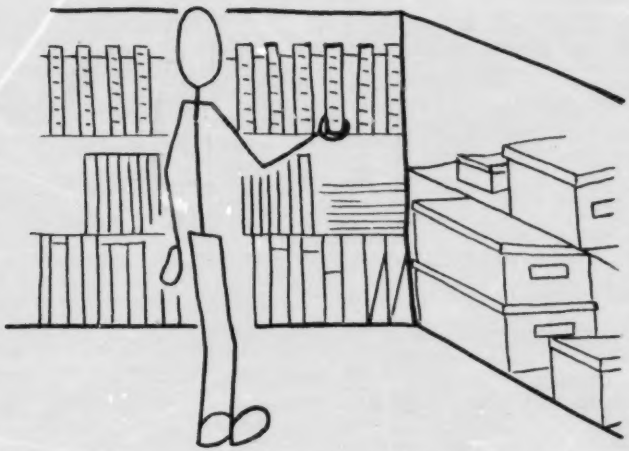
Many programs have been enriched through the use of trained volunteers. They have much needed time and talent to offer. Some groups from which volunteer reading helpers may be recruited are:

other students...

parents...

senior citizens...

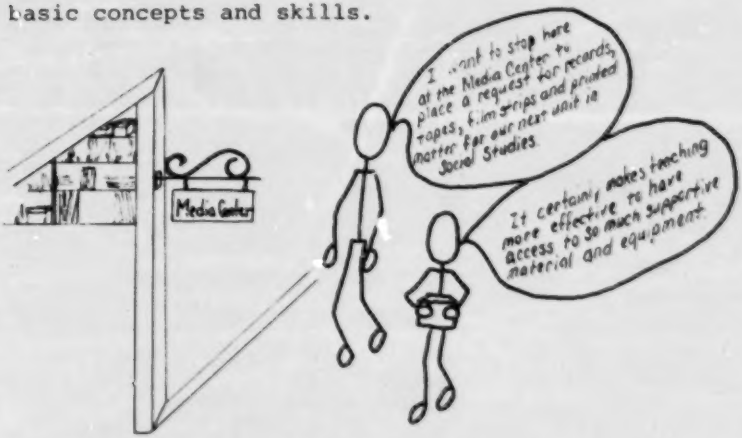
An appropriate training program is essential to the effective operation of a volunteer program.



Section D
Selecting and Utilizing Materials

1. THE SCHOOL MEDIA CENTER MEETS THE ALA-NEA STANDARDS.

The media of instruction help to shape the learning environment. They determine to a great degree whether pupils' learning styles and interests will be met in a challenging, dynamic way. A wide range of materials and equipment is needed to provide for individual differences, thereby contributing to mastery of basic concepts and skills.

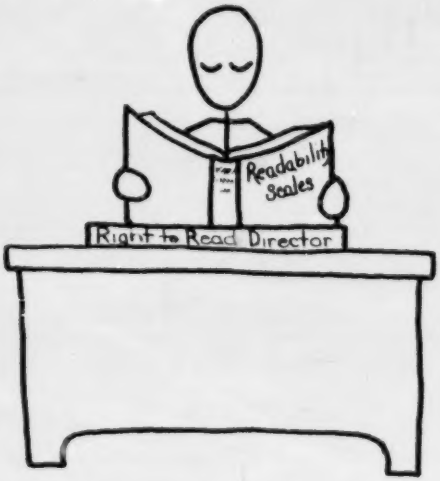

Media Center
I want to stop here at the Media Center to place a request for records, tapes, film strips and printed matter for our next unit in Social Studies.
It certainly makes teaching more effective to have access to so much supportive material and equipment.

The standards set for school media centers cover the media program; staff and services; selection, accessibility and organization of materials; resources; facilities; and supplemental services.

2. ALL TEXTBOOKS AND OTHER MATERIALS ARE APPROPRIATE TO THE INSTRUCTIONAL LEVEL OF THE STUDENTS USING THEM.

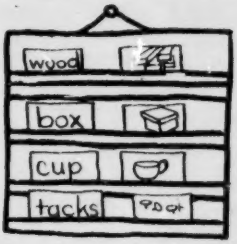
Pupils frequently fail to learn when the books they are given are too difficult. Regardless of the quality of a book, if the level of difficulty of the text is far above the reading level of the pupils it is inappropriate.

To insure that textbooks and other instructional materials being considered for purchase are written at a level of difficulty suitable to the pupils involved, it is recommended that the Right to Read director establish their level of readability for the textbook selection committee, and that this information be used as one of the criteria for selection.

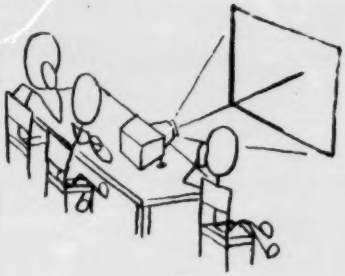


3. MATERIALS IN BOTH CLASSROOMS AND MEDIA CENTERS ACCOMMODATE THE VARYING LEARNING STYLES OF THE PUPIL POPULATION.

Opportunities to learn should be varied. While the most common way of learning involves reading and listening, some pupils will not learn unless a greater selection of learning materials is available.



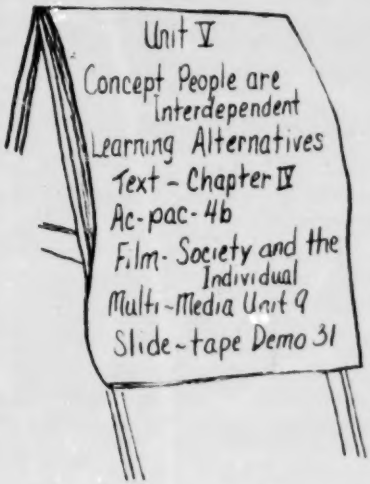
Traditional textbooks and materials need to be supplemented with pictures, flashcards, tapes, records, models, films, filmloops, slides, videotapes, transparencies, tracing materials, parts to assemble, and experiments to perform.



Not all pupils can learn by reading and listening alone. More pupils will succeed when there are alternative avenues to learning.

4. THE MATERIALS IN BOTH CLASSROOMS AND MEDIA CENTERS ARE SELECTED TO ACCOMMODATE THE WIDE RANGE OF READING INTERESTS OF THE PUPIL POPULATION.

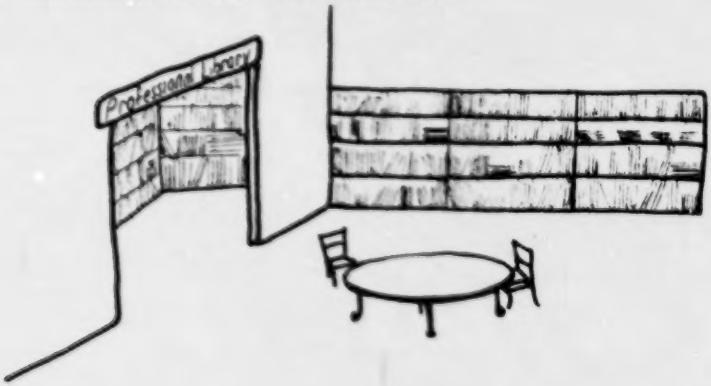
Themes in literature and concepts in other content areas are so broad that a wide range of experiences in media can lead to their attainment. To require one set of materials for a particular learning experience is not only not necessary, it frequently fails to meet the individual needs of pupils. Pupils have different interests as well as different reading levels and learning styles.



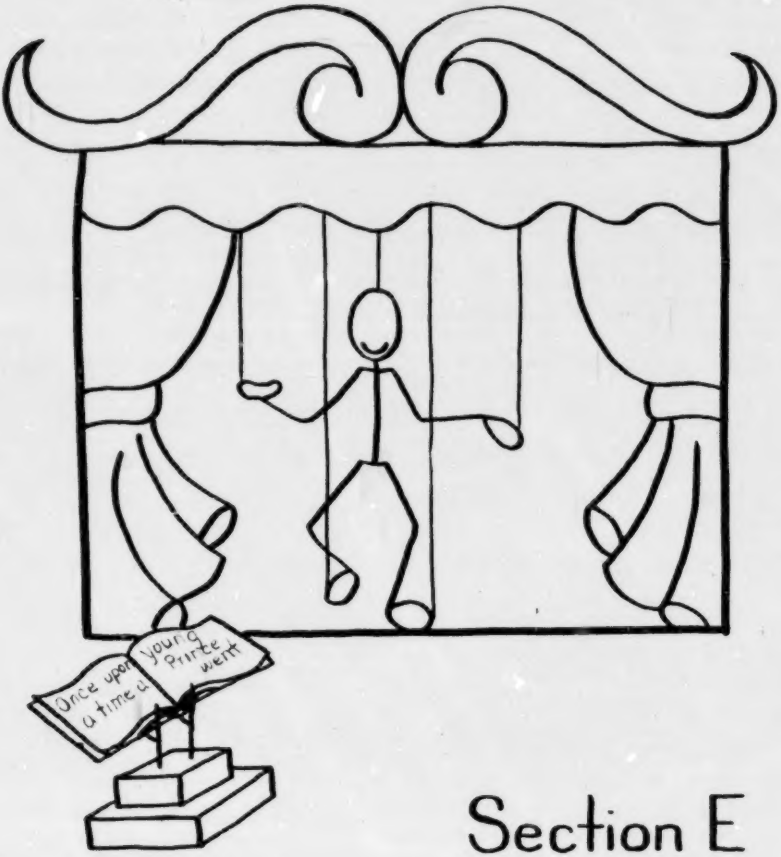
Since interest is one of the basic components of motivation, using the results of interest inventories when ordering materials will enrich the learning environment.

5. THE SCHOOL SYSTEM MAINTAINS A LIBRARY OF CAREFULLY SELECTED AND FREQUENTLY UPDATED PROFESSIONAL MEDIA.

For schools of 250 students or more, it is recommended that a professional library of 200 to 1000 books and 40 to 50 professional magazines be established. In addition, there should be manuals, reports, and curriculum guides, as necessary.



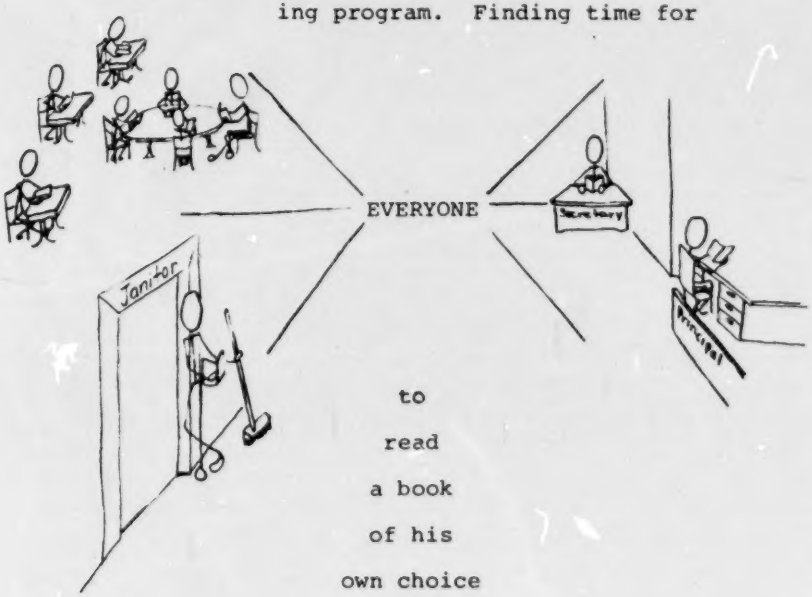
The professional library should be available to both teachers and parents to keep them abreast of current trends, research findings, and alternative approaches to teaching that have been developed.



Section E
Fostering Reading Interests

1. THE SCHOOL READING PROGRAM RECOGNIZES THE IMPORTANCE OF PERSONAL INDEPENDENT READING AND PROMOTES THIS TYPE OF READING IN A VARIETY OF WAYS.

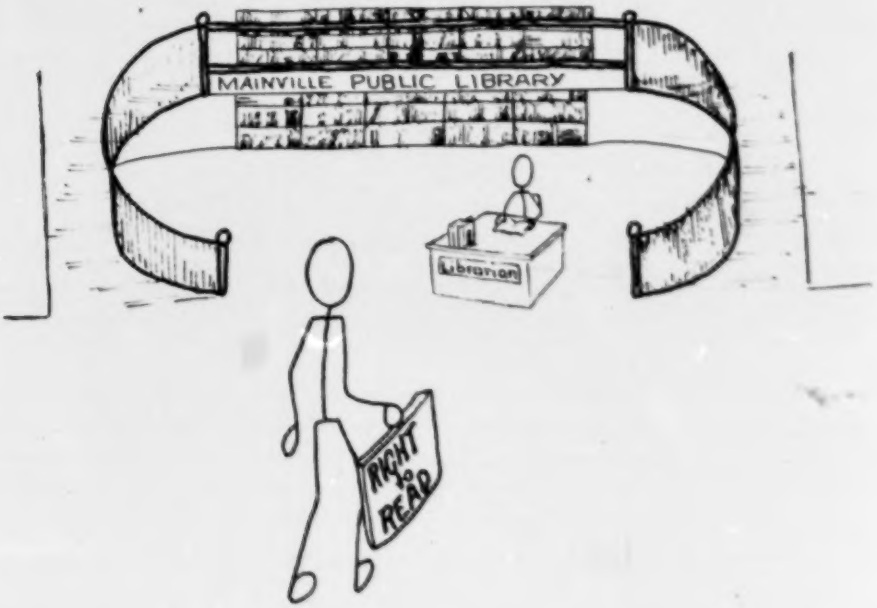
To develop good habits, attitudes, interests, and tastes in personal, independent reading is one goal of a good reading program. Finding time for



to
read
a book
of his
own choice
during school time
makes personal reading seem important
and aids the attainment of that goal.

2. THE PUBLIC LIBRARY PROMOTES READING AMONG ALL SEGMENTS OF THE POPULATION.

Wide use of the public library through individual choice is expressive of a literate people. To achieve this state, it is important for the school reading program to interface with the public library program and to encourage activities that build upon and enrich what the school program can accomplish.



CHARTER SCHOOL SYSTEMS

CONNECTICUT

1. Colchester
   Superintendent Mr. Edward McKinney
   R2R Director Miss Rosemary Duggan
2. Danbury
   Superintendent Mr. Edward R. Sillari
   R2R Director Mr. Edward S. Moore
3. No. Grosvenordale
   Superintendent Dr. Vincent Trainor, Jr.
   R2R Director Mrs. Gladys Tucker
4. North Haven
   Superintendent Dr. Delio J. Rotondo
   R2R Director Mr. David A. Shafer
5. Stamford
   Superintendent Dr. Reigh Carpenter
   R2R Director Mrs. Constance S. Wood
6. Stonington
   Superintendent Dr. Richard Varrsale
   R2R Director Mr. Joseph B. Bibbo
7. Watertown
   Superintendent Mr. James O. Holigan
   R2R Director Mrs. Nancy K. Rosa
8. Windsor
   Superintendent Mr. Paul Sorbo
   R2R Director Mr. Donald H. Schaffer

MAINE

1. Etna
   Superintendent Mr. Norman P. Soucie
   R2R Director Mrs. Joyce B. Bailey

MAINE CONT'D

2. Madawaska
   Superintendent Mr. John Houghton
   R2R Director Miss Angela Chamberland
3. Millinocket
   Superintendent Mr. Laurel E. Gardner
   R2R Director Mrs. Dorothy MacDonald
4. Rumford
   Superintendent Mr. Howard Dunn
   R2R Director Mrs. Joanne S. Burgess
5. Westbrook
   Superintendent Mr. Harold Hickey
   R2R Director Miss Donna L. Fuller

MASSACHUSETTS

1. Bedford
   Superintendent Mr. William Keough, Jr.
   R2R Director Mrs. Carol Walcott
2. Boston
   Superintendent Dr. William J. Leary
   R2R Director Dr. Marie T. Hayes
3. Brockton
   Superintendent Mr. Joseph Killory
   R2R Director Dr. Kenneth H. Sennett
4. Framingham
   Superintendent Dr. Albert Benson
   R2R Director Miss Beatrice Malloy
5. Mansfield
   Superintendent Dr. John Collins
   R2R Director Mrs. Rebecca Center

MASSACHUSETTS CONT'D

6. Marshfield
   Superintendent Dr. Robert Peebles
   R2R Director Mrs. Constance Jackson
7. Needham
   Superintendent Mr. William M. Powers
   R2R Director Dr. William D. Finan
8. Spencer
   Superintendent Dr. Edward O'Connor
   R2R Director Mrs. Ruth F. King
9. Springfield
   Superintendent Dr. John Deady
   R2R Director Miss Katherine Moriarty
10. Wakefield
    Superintendent Dr. George MacArthur
    R2R Director Mr. Lawrence P. Sweeney
11. Worcester
    Superintendent Dr. John J. Connor
    R2R Director Miss Doryce M. Moosey

NEW HAMPSHIRE

1. Concord
   Superintendent Mr. Seth O'Shea
   R2R Director Mrs. Eleanor Hall
2. Littleton-Supervisory Union #35
   Superintendent Mr. William Grass
   R2R Director Miss Margaret Guilmette
3. Rochester
   Superintendent Dr. Thayer D. Wade
   R2R Director Mrs. Faustina M. Trace

NEW HAMPSHIRE CONT'D

4. Troy
   Superintendent Mr. Austin Frain
   R2R Director Mr. Norman Evans

RHODE ISLAND

1. Cranston
   Superintendent Dr. Joseph Picano
   R2R Director Miss Marsha Malcolm
2. East Providence
   Superintendent Mr. Edward Martin
   R2R Director Dr. Shirley Kessler
3. Exeter-West Greenwich
   Superintendent Mr. John Eldridge
   R2R Director Mrs. Jane Anderson
4. West Warwick
   Superintendent Mr. Edwin Luther
   R2R Director Mrs. Elinor McKanna